

A Mark of Excellence

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25 June 2006

Blast From the Past: Gather Ye Acorns

Susan Lin

Last issue we re-introduced this chronological showcase of Mark's lesser-known performances with 1987's "Man on the Edge" episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. We continue our quest for more buried treasure in the 1980s archives with a look at "Gather Ye Acorns," an episode of Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories*. As in our previous Famous-Director-TV-Show, *Amazing Stories* has no regular characters; each half-hour program is a single story that fits in with the series theme of – well, of being amazing, I guess. *Amazing Stories* was originally the title of a science fiction magazine, and yet "Gather Ye Acorns" whose story was also created by Spielberg – is far more fairy-tale than sci-fi.

Once again we experience a sort of multilayered flashback problem as we settle into our comfy couch, almost like that bottomless image you see when you hold up a mirror to a mirror. Here we are hitting the Play button, all ready to be whisked back to the year 1986, and instead we see the date "1932" on the screen. Where are we, and when are we?

And more importantly, where is Mark? He hasn't arrived yet; first we have to meet the boy Jonathan Quick, who, as you may have guessed, will later become the man Jonathan Quick, and that's where our interest will kick up several notches. But first we need to witness a very peculiar scene where Boy Jonathan is shirking his as-

signed task of reading the medical textbook his father has given him. Can you blame the lad? How many twelve-year-olds do you know who would enjoy curling up with a copy of *Principles of Surgery*, cool gory illustrations notwithstanding? It *does* make a nice blanket for napping; that is, until a hairy troll-like creature hiding in the treetops starts dropping nuts onto it.

Yes, a troll. He introduces himself as Mother Nature's Only Son and proceeds to advise young Jonathan to cling to the child in him, hold on to his treasures, never throw away anything that he loves, and that "the world has doctors a-plenty; what we could truly do with is a few more dreamers." And then, poof, he's gone, and we are flashing forward, as Dad tunes the radio to 1938 and we see that Jonathan has now grown to Markhood, a full-fledged adult who's all handsome youthful energy as he bounds into the house in a newsboy cap, the sleeves of his plaid shirt rolled up to reveal his strong forearms; the collar unbuttoned, exposing a generous amount of –

Now hold on, here. This isn't gratuitous; it's part of the story. No, really, it *is*! See, all that glistening skin, that's meant to illustrate that Jonathan is back after a *hard day's work*! See, it's a *dramatic* thing. And that big, beautiful smile he flashes at his proud parents is *not* to set our hearts aflutter, oh, no, no, no. It's simply to show how *happy* Jonathan is as he saves money for his dream. Yes, that's right, he's smiling, and laughing that wonderful laugh of his...because he's happy! About... his

dream....

Hmmm? Where was I? Oh, yes, his dream. And that dream is college? Mom and Dad think so, but oopsie, they're wrong – He promised them a surprise, and here it is, as their darling boy comes driving up in a shiny red car!

(Susan hits Pause button to allow for collective Corvette Summer flashback, then resumes playing video.)

That, on top of Jonathan's messy room, still full of his old toys, is enough for poor old Dad: "You're a bum, and I want you out of my house tonight!" Jonathan drives off into the darkness, but his path is clear: He murmurs, with almost trancelike determination, "There's doctors a-plenty in this world; what we truly need is a few more dreamers...."

All right, here's where I must pull my feet off the coffee table, sit up, and once again hit the Pause button. You see, viewing companions, I've just learned that this particular gem from our Blast from the Past archive will soon become available for purchase as part of the Season One collection of *Amazing Stories*; the DVD is currently slated for a July 18 release. Which means I should probably just stop this presentation right here, and tell you to just wait and see the whole show for yourself. Yes, yes I should. I really should.

Notes from the Editor

Greetings and apologies for the lateness of this issue. I was in London for several weeks. Two highlights: one was driving past Elstree Studios, the other strolling the grounds of the former Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum, better known to Mark-fans as *Britannia Hospital*. My sister and family live just up the road from this now converted to luxury flats estate. When still a hospital, it boasted the long-

est corridor.

Just a reminder that the deadline for entering the CHPHP drawing is 31 August 2006. \$1.00/2 tickets entered in the drawing for 1 of 2 personalized autographed by Mark prizes.

If you'd like to have your birthday wishes to Mark included in the September is-

sue, please e-mail a brief message to HdShroom@aol.com, subject: Birthday Wishes, or snail them to IMHFC-Birthday Wishes, PO Box 287, Grand Blanc MI 48480 US. Deadline is also 31 August 2006.



Future Watch



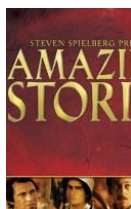
As we promised/threatened in March, *Robot Chicken* has been let loose! Volume

One is now available; Mark voices characters in four of the first season's twenty episodes in the off-the-wall stop-motion animated comedy seen on the Cartoon Network's late-night Adult Swim.



Look out on June 20 for *Look, Up in the Sky!: The Amazing Story of Superman*. This feature-length documentary on DVD interviews a super-colossal list of

guests, including Mark, about the Man of Steel's long life in comics, film and TV.



Gather your pennies: "Gather Ye Acorns," and the rest of *Amazing Stories: Season One* comes to DVD on July 18. For more – much more – about Mark's starring role in the "Acorns" episode, read our *Blast from the Past* column.

Mark is voicing a character in an upcoming Educational Adventures series, *Danger Rangers*. Executive producer is Howard Kazanjian. Look for this to air on public TV.

He is also in an Adult Swim animated series for Cartoon Network. Titled *Metalocalypse*, the pilot episode also featured 2 Metallica band members.

Once again, Mark has teamed up with official-pix.com for pre-orders of personalised autographed photos. Check their website for more details.

Mark is bringing his voice talent to the dubbed Sega game *Ryu Ga Gotoku*, US title *Yakuza*. Mark's character is the insane Majima, a violent Yakuza boss with a twisted sense of humour.

10th Anniversary Celebration!



We're kicking off a year-long tenth anniversary celebration a bit early!!

The **IMHFC** annually makes a donation to **CHPHP** in honour of Mark's birthday. In recognition of the beginning of the 10th year as Mark's sanctioned fan club and a fun way to have members participate in raising additional funds to donate to Mark's charity of choice, we have an incentive!

From now through 31 August 2006, for each dollar the fan club member donates for this, two slips with their name will be placed in an envelope. On 25 September 2006, two lucky members' slips will be pulled. The first member will have a choice between an issue of *'The Black Pearl'* or a

'Galactic Heroes Luke Skywalker + Speeder Bike' set personalized and autographed by Mark! The second member will receive the other gift, also personalized and autographed by Mark! The winners will be notified on 25th September, and the announcement will be in the 25 December 2006 newsletter.

As the fan club's gift, each current member as of 25 September 2006, will have 1 slip in the envelope.

Time-line:
now through 31 August:

for every dollar you donate for **CHPHP**, 2 slips with your name will be placed in an envelope

Early September:

all money donated will be sent to **CHPHP** in time for Mark's birthday



25 September:

1 slip per current member placed in envelope
2 lucky members' slips pulled and they are notified

25 December:

winners are announced in the 25 December 2006 newsletter

Send your donation along with the slip below to:

IMHFC
PO Box 287
Grand Blanc MI 48480
US

If sending a money order, it needs to be in USD.

10th Anniversary Celebration CHPHP Donation

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Country: _____ ZIP/Post Code: _____

(Puts feet back up on coffee table, and hits Play.) Now then, where were we? The next scene seems to have jumped ahead, but, oh, these confusing time warps! We aren't told to what year. For a moment we don't even recognize the dull, dusty car driving up as the gleam machine that was being so lovingly waxed in the previous scene. And we certainly wouldn't recognize Mark behind that enormous scraggly beard, long hair, and layer of dirt, except that we're devoted fans, of course, and he can't hide from us. Judging from his tattered clothing and rundown desert shack, life hasn't been so dreamy for Jonathan these days. Along comes a guy who keeps up with the fashions of the time; from his stingy brim hat and skinny tie we finally deduce we're somewhere in the 1950s. Oopsie – Fashionable Guy is a developer, and he's telling Jonathan to clear out. As Our Man despondently packs up his odd jumble of possessions, a tumbleweed rolls into the rundown shack, and morphs into the troll.

Jonathan's a wee bit peeved at his hairy guidance counselor: "You ruined my life! I'm a bum!" He starts flinging things from his jumble piles at the troll. "I have NOTHING!"

"You have your treasures," replies the troll, as he deftly avoids one treasure after another, all on a colli-

sion course with his head.

"They're not treasures!" SMASH!
"They're pieces of JUNK!" SMASH!

The bearded mentor reappears. "That's your father talking," he calmly admonishes....

(Susan hits Pause to allow for collective Star Wars flashback; resumes)

"I know," Jonathan wearily replies. "It's a damn shame it took me so long to listen." Cut to the outside of the rundown shack, as it is now literally being run down by the developer's bulldozer, while Jonathan bitterly sits with his dusty treasures in his dusty convertible.

Our next scene flashes us forward again, presumably to the present day, and we know from the blues harmonica that the hard times just keep getting harder. In fact, we're expecting to see Jonathan living under the underpass we're zooming in on, but no, it just happens to be the place where that old car of his has stalled out. Somehow he manages to get it to the Last Chance Gas Station, hoping to get just enough of a fill-up to take himself and The Big Red Car out for one very-final spin. Alas, counting Jonathan's little pitcherful of pennies holds no allure for the attendant –

No Sale. The unusual container does, however, attract the attention of a woman in a nearby limousine: "Pardon me, but I haven't been able to take my eyes off that exquisite mug of yours...."

Hmmm – our sentiments exactly! Oh, she's talking about the pitcher. And we must admit the exquisite mug we're fascinated with is somewhat obscured by all that white hair and old-man makeup.

Here we must stop, so as not to reveal the ending, but it's safe to say, in this era of e-Bay, that the conclusion doesn't pack any of the surprise it might have enjoyed back in 1986. No, here the Amazing comes not from the Story, but from watching Mark's amazing skill as he convincingly ages his character from scene to scene, both in movement and voice. Still more amazing is that despite the constraints of the character's ever-changing age, and the show's running time of less than thirty minutes, Mark still covers his usual incredible scope of emotional range, be it full-out rage, infectious enthusiasm, weary despair, or a mischievous twinkle. It's that kind of gift that makes "Gather Ye Acorns" a treasure indeed.

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for the slip on the other side.**

Mark on dvd The Full DISClosure

Susan Lin

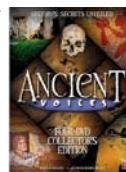
For those who may have missed this column's debut in the March issue, *The Full Disclosure* devotes itself to documenting everything digital - be it drama or documentary - that has at least a dose of Mark. While we kicked off last issue with the topic of New Releases, this column is not limited to recent titles; our ultimate goal is to be that comprehensive listing of on-disc Mark that's so hard to find anywhere else. Join us in our fascination with shiny silver objects!

Hmmm, these DVDs do make handy little mirrors, don't they? Let's hold ours up to our favorite actor as we explore this month's theme of **As Himself**. That's a more wide-ranging subject than you'd expect: It includes everything from voice-over narration to interviews to hosting a program, and of course those fact-and-fiction worlds-collide moments when sitcom characters meet real-world guest stars.

And now, the usual **disclaimers**: Since each issue's column will have a different theme, obviously some titles will fall into more than one category. We plan to add the titles to all categories that apply, so consider this your official warning: keep track of duplicate titles on your wish lists. We are not responsible if you accidentally buy sixteen boxed sets of the Star Wars Trilogy. As before, we're currently limiting our list to US releases. Finally, a reminder to use your own **discretion** when you decide what you might add to your shelf; so far we haven't located a source that lists a percentage of Mark footage for each title. Wouldn't that be nice? Imagine seeing a sticker on a disc that read "New! Improved! Now with 50% more Mark Hamill!" We'd snap it right up.

Mark Hamill as Himself

Ancient Voices
(narrator)



Batman (the 1989 motion picture) 2-disc special edition
Mark narrates the bonus feature "Legends of the Dark Knight: The History of Batman"

The Best of the Muppet Show: Mark Hamill/Paul Simon/Raquel Welch



The Big Red One: The Reconstruction
Recent interviews with the cast in "The Real Glory: Deconstructing *The Big Red One*"

Look, Up in the Sky! The Amazing Story of Superman
Mark is one of many interviewees in this feature-length documentary

Robot Chicken, Volume One
(Plastic Buffet episode)

Saturday Night Live: The Best of Chris Kattan
(Mark's 1997 skit)



The Sci-Fi Files (narrator)



The Simpsons: Bart Wars
(the "Mayored to the Mob" episode)

Space Ghost Coast to Coast
(Switcheroo II episode)



Star Wars Trilogy (Bonus Edition)

Bonus Features:
Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars Trilogy
The Force is with them: The Legacy of Star Wars
The Characters of Star Wars
The Birth of the Lightsaber

The Stars of Star Wars: Interviews from the Cast

3rd Rock from the Sun: Season 2
(Fifteen Minutes of Dick episode)

To the Galaxy and Beyond with Mark Hamill (formerly titled *Hollywood Aliens and Monsters*)

And let's not forget **Comic Book: The Movie's** little hidden extra! Don Swan interviews Mark Hamill....Or is it the other way around?





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The Last Word...

A Mark of Excellence is the quarterly newsletter of the **International Mark Hamill Fan Club**. Yearly dues are \$15 US, and include 4 consecutive issues of the newsletter, a membership card, access to the fan club area on the website, and special mailings as appropriate.

Submissions, including photos or original artwork, are welcomed; final editing is the discretion of the editor. If you wish your photo or artwork returned please enclose a sase, and attach your name/address on the back of your submission.

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